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Book Reviews

The Papers of Alfred Blalock. In Two Volumes. Ed. by Mark M. Ravitch, M.D. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966. 2026 pp.

THE Surgical Papers of W. S. Halsted which were first published in 1928 and reprinted in 1952 are basic in a surgeon's personal library. Now the papers of the renowned descendant of Halsted at Johns Hopkins, Alfred Blalock, have been collected and beautifully presented in two volumes which also belong in a surgeon's personal library.

There are 269 Blalock items which comprise the body of the work: formal articles, editorials, discussions of papers read at meetings, biographical sketches of friends, obituary memoirs, etc. From this material the great kindly, witty, thoughtful and humble person of Blalock shines forth. A young medical student reader who had never known Blalock could grasp the development of ideas about shock, hemorrhage, blood flow, cardiac output, lymph, the circulation, and surgery. At the same time he could scarcely avoid recognizing a great man. Everything Blalock wrote and

said was in order, the words are simple and direct, the thoughts are logical and unpretentious. What is more some superb low-key editing provides the setting for Blalock's lucid discussions of papers delivered by others. For those readers who knew him he will come alive again in all his charm and attractiveness.

Appendix A is a curriculum vitae and bibliography and Appendix B contains biographical notes on coauthors of Blalock papers. Most interesting and engaging are the first 66 pages of Volume I. Ravitch, obviously out of deep friendship and admiration, wrote a short sympathetic life of Blalock and a very moving "Medical History of Alfred Blalock." The biography includes nicely selected photographs and the medical history contains excerpts from clinical records. Many persons will be struck by the severe physical misfortunes this uncomplaining and happy man suffered and will be distressed by the sadness of his last illness.

The work is a treasure for the libraries of students of medicine from freshmen to professors.

JOHN H. MULHOLLAND, M.D.